United Nations A/C.3/64/SR.12

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 December 2009
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Penke ..... (Latvia)

Contents

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

09-55749 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/64/38)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/64/79-E/2009/74, A/64/151, A/64/152, A/64/164, A/64/190 and A/64/342)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/64/218)

1. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia), referring to the Secretary-General's reports on the status of women, called on Member States to give full consideration to the recommendations included therein and welcomed the campaign to end violence against women. Violence against women was not a widespread phenomenon in Tunisia, which had implemented effective prevention measures. In November 2008, it had launched a national strategy for the prevention of violent behaviour within the family, with a view to mobilizing society as a whole. It had also adopted a set of measures to protect the fundamental rights of women, to integrate them into the development process and to enable them to participate fully in building the society envisaged in the declaration of 7 November 1987, while also preserving a social balance and enabling women to realize their full potential in the family and in public life.

2. Tunisian women were present in all sectors of activity, production and investment, and were increasingly involved in decision-making. They held leadership positions in both the executive and the legislative branches, in the courts and in advisory bodies, as well as in the civil service. Tunisia had two women ministers and 43 women members of Parliament.

3. Tunisia's example showed that political development and social equilibrium could go hand-in-hand. It attested to the importance of protecting women's rights and consolidating mechanisms for partnership and cooperation between States, which was essential for the achievement of sustainable, equitable, integrated and balanced development.

4. **Ms. Saidi** (Rwanda), noting that 2010 would mark the anniversaries of global commitments relating to the advancement of women, appealed to the international community to build upon that momentum and welcomed the General Assembly's decision to create a new United Nations gender entity. Always a firm advocate of women's rights, Rwanda had adopted a policy of gender mainstreaming in its public and private sectors, and in its programmes and budgets. Gender equality was provided for in the Constitution, and Rwanda was the first country to have a majority female parliament. A gender observatory had been established, which was responsible for mainstreaming a gender perspective into Government policy planning. Rwanda had also passed laws that were integral to women's social and economic development and to their financial stability, including laws relating to inheritance and land ownership.

5. Conscious of the importance of education for development, Rwanda had made the education of girls a priority. However, while gender parity had been achieved in primary schools, many challenges remained in secondary education. Women were still often underrepresented in scientific and technological fields, and remained largely employed in the informal sector.

6. Increased political will and commitment at the highest level were essential in order to end gender-based violence. During the genocide of 1994, the most inhumane acts of violence had been perpetrated against women in Rwanda, including deliberate infection with HIV. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda had first identified the crime of rape as a form of genocide. It was important that victims should not become marginalized but should instead be reintegrated into society and given the socio-economic support that they required. Her Government firmly believed that women should play an integral role in promoting peace and security in conflict and post-conflict situations. It remained firmly committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009).

7. The economic crisis had disproportionately affected women, as demonstrated by the increase in unemployment, poverty and violence. However, the crisis had in fact presented an opportunity for Governments to create jobs and to implement public policies that would help to improve the situation of women.

8. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) congratulated the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the contributions made by their institutions and for their personal commitment to the advancement of women throughout the world. While women accounted for more than half the population of the world and played a key role in society, much remained to be done to meet the commitments undertaken by the international community, especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), many of which concerned women. The results had been mixed owing to the persistence of discrimination and inequalities based on biological, psychological, cultural and legal factors. Most of the poor people in the world were women and girls. That situation was a result of unequal access to production resources, gender biases with respect to property and inheritance, a lack of access to education, the limited participation of women in decision-making, stereotypes in the labour market, armed conflict, the inadequate coverage of health services, and, above all, HIV/AIDS.

9. States should join forces to promote the empowerment of women and to enable them to play an integral role in development. While that task was a formidable one, her Government believed that the international community should, first and foremost, focus its efforts on education and poverty eradication.

10. She welcomed the decision to establish a new entity with universal competence within the United Nations system that would be responsible for gender-related issues and the advancement of women worldwide. Her country, which gave high priority to the advancement of women, had drawn up national strategy guidelines designed, inter alia, to address gender-based inequalities so that women could realize their potential through their full participation in development and national life, and through the establishment of economic, social, political and cultural conditions conducive to the enjoyment of their fundamental and civil rights.

11. Cameroon had made significant progress towards implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and was continually adjusting the strategies laid down in its policy declaration and in the multisectoral action plan entitled "Women and development". Those programmes served as a road map for Government action on education, health, the economy, the full use of female human resources, efforts to counter violence against women and decision-making. As part of its efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015, Cameroon had recently completed its new growth and employment strategy document, which was aimed at improving the status of women. In specific terms, action would be taken to raise awareness about women's rights and the instruments related thereto, including in all relevant ministries and State-owned companies, with a view to promoting gender mainstreaming in development planning, budgeting and resource management.

12. Reaffirming Cameroon's commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and the MDGs, she stressed that the advancement of women called for international solidarity. Her delegation therefore appealed to development partners to uphold the commitments that they had freely undertaken at United Nations meetings and conferences on development.

13. **Mr. Ould Ghadi** (Mauritania) said that his country had adopted all of the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Fourth World Conference on Women and was upholding the international commitments for the promotion of women's rights under the international human rights instruments to which it had acceded, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified in 2001, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1991. Mauritania had established a Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Families, whose mandate included the advancement of women and their participation in development. The Ministry had implemented programmes to further strengthen the family, to improve the collection and analysis of data on the advancement of women and women's movements, and to increase awareness in society about the rights of women, children and families.

14. Mauritania had made considerable progress, especially in combating gender-based discrimination, through the adoption of a personal status code and affirmative action measures, for example, in Parliament. Women currently held senior positions, including in regional administration and in the

diplomatic service, and a woman had recently been appointed to head the country's diplomatic service.

15. Having recalled the measures taken by Mauritania in the areas of poverty eradication, education, health and violence against women, he said that his country was determined to improve the economic participation of women, especially by facilitating their access to productive resources and markets, combating unemployment and developing women's projects. To that end, Mauritania was making every effort to encourage a culture of saving and credit for women. In the field of education, the enrolment rate for girls in basic education had been above 98 per cent in 2008 as a result of the actions taken in that regard, such as the adoption of a law on mandatory school attendance. In the field of health, Mauritania had worked over the past four years to improve the coverage and quality of health services; hence, the rate of maternal mortality had dropped. In addition, State-led campaigns had helped to raise women's awareness of health issues, especially breastfeeding and HIV/AIDS prevention. Mauritania had put in place the institutional capacities to counter violence against women, including a national commission to combat harmful practices and a national commission on human rights. Policymakers had been given training on ways to ensure that victims receive assistance and women gained access to the media. Mauritanian radio stations had a large number of female personnel and many broadcasts were about the economic and social development of women.

16. Mauritania was providing increased resources for the advancement of women and planned to overcome the many remaining obstacles through cooperation with its development partners.

17. **Ms. Taela** (Mozambique) said that, in keeping with the principles enshrined in its Constitution, Mozambique had created institutional mechanisms and policies for the advancement of women, such as the 2002-2006 National Plan for the Advancement of Women and also the gender policy, which made it possible to identify the measures to be taken to promote gender equality, respect for fundamental rights and women's participation in development. Mozambique had focused its efforts on the enrolment of girls and adult education, particularly in rural areas, and on the economic empowerment of women, by encouraging their participation in income generation activities. For example, the new land law explicitly stipulated that women had the same rights to land ownership as men; the Labour Code now provided equal rights for men and women; the Family Code had been revised; and the Commercial Code allowed women to carry out commercial activities and to have access to credit.

18. Mozambique was a party to the main international and regional instruments relating to women and had adopted several laws to implement its international commitments, including the law on the promotion and protection of the rights of children; the law against trafficking in persons, particularly women and children; and the law on domestic violence against women. Recalling that her country supported the campaign launched by the Secretary-General, she explained that her Government had implemented a national plan to prevent and combat violence against women for the period 2008 to 2012, under which police stations provided services for women and children who were victims of violence. It was also important to raise awareness throughout society; indeed, the First Lady of Mozambique was involved in such actions, which included promoting maternal health and the economic empowerment of women and girls. Despite all those efforts, however, women were still victims of gender stereotypes that prevented them from gaining access to high-level posts. Their situation was exacerbated by the economic, financial, food and energy crises, and by climate change.

19. In conclusion, she stressed the importance of generosity from the international community to achieve the targets set for the advancement of women. In addition, her country supported the creation of a composite United Nations entity responsible for gender issues, which should facilitate progress in the advancement of women in all regions of the world.

20. **Ms. Tiendrébéogo** (Burkina Faso), welcoming the progress made at the intergovernmental level in promoting gender equality and access to decent work, combating violence, enhancing security and promoting the empowerment of women, said that her country had not remained at the margins of those developments. In 1997, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women had been created to ensure the full enjoyment by women of their rights and, since 1990, the Government had been seeking to combat the practice of female circumcision. To that end, it had created a national committee and had incorporated female genital mutilation in the Penal Code. To put an end to that practice, which had been

condemned at the highest level by the President himself, Mrs. Compaoré, his wife, had launched a joint initiative with Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo.

21. The national day dedicated to that effort had been held under the theme "Political will for zero tolerance of female circumcision". The elimination of that heinous and discriminatory practice was essential, inter alia, to improve maternal health and to promote gender equality. The recently adopted national plan of action advocated strengthening transboundary cooperation in that area.

22. Cooperation between States, national partners and civil society was essential for the success of such actions. In that regard, her Government wished to thank the Inter-Agency Network for Women and Gender Equality for its support in drawing up the national plan of action for 2009 to 2010.

23. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that preparations to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW). The Union, which had been established in 1979 with the full support of the Eritrean Government, worked for gender equality and the advancement of women by promoting better political, economic, social and cultural opportunities.

24. In order for gender equality to be achieved, it was not enough to outlaw discriminatory practices; the root causes of gender imbalances needed to be addressed. Accordingly, the Eritrean Government's poverty reduction strategy paper focused on the needs and interests of women, whether in the areas of education, primary health care, access to drinking water or rural microcredit. The Government's savings and microcredit programme, operating in all six regions, was the largest in the country and had made it possible to establish local banks whose clients were mostly women. The high rate of participation of women in literacy programmes was also very encouraging, and the strategy that had been adopted in those programmes had helped reduce gender disparities, although women continued to shoulder heavy responsibilities within the family.

25. In the area of health, information campaigns had been organized to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and the Government was also paying close attention to reproductive health and reproductive rights. Its efforts had helped to reduce the rate of maternal mortality and to improve access to health care, among other positive results.

26. Violence against women was played out in many different ways. The Eritrean Government attached special importance to combating female genital mutilation, a practice that was very widespread in the country, although now criminalized by law. However, the adoption of new legislation would not end violence against women; public awareness-raising campaigns and other relevant programmes were also needed.

27. Her delegation remained committed to the advancement of women. It welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to create a new rational and effective framework for addressing women's issues and looked forward to participating actively in that effort.

28. **Ms. Muhimpundu** (Burundi) said that, in October 2003, the Government of Burundi had drawn up a national gender policy based on the themes of the programme adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. It had also implemented significant macroeconomic and structural reforms on the basis of the Strategic Framework for Combating Poverty, a triennial development programme aimed at improving the status of all citizens without discrimination.

29. The implementation of that programme had enabled progress to be made towards achieving some of the MDGs focused on women's empowerment. In the political field, the new electoral code stipulated that at least 30 per cent of the persons elected by direct universal vote, including to Parliament, should be women. With regard to security, women were participating in the peaceful settlement of the disputes in which Burundi was involved. They held senior positions in the police force and the army, and they took part in international peacekeeping missions in Darfur and Somalia.

30. In the economic sector, entrepreneurship among women was on the rise. Conscious that the economic development of urban and rural women had an impact on the country's development as a whole, the Government had launched a rehabilitation project for women based on three pillars: support for women's income-generating associations, the empowerment of vulnerable women and actions to eliminate violence against women.

31. In the social sphere, the revised Penal Code enacted on 22 April 2009 included harsh penalties for sexual violence. Furthermore, as of January 2010, pregnant women would receive free medical care until childbirth. Free primary education for girls would also be expanded, especially in rural areas.

32. In conclusion, she said that implementation of the reforms had been greatly facilitated by the understanding of the people of Burundi and she reiterated her country's support for the creation of a composite entity for the advancement of women.

33. **Ms. Al Kendi** (United Arab Emirates), stressing that her country was continuing to work towards the implementation of the commitments undertaken at Beijing and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, said that women's issues had become an integral part of national development policies. Gender equality was enshrined in the Constitution, which provided for the rights of women in such areas as employment, social security, education and property.

34. The United Arab Emirates had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2004 and had submitted its first report in 2008. She recalled that her Government had adopted several laws for the advancement of women, including legislation on maternity leave, and that it had created special mechanisms to enable women to play a greater role in public life and to contribute to national development.

35. Women were increasingly involved in the political sphere, including at the highest levels: two women had recently been appointed ambassadors; 9 of the 40 members of the National Federal Council were women; and the banking sector, which was one of the main economic sectors of the country, was recruiting an increasing number of women. Women from the United Arab Emirates were also working in a number of international organizations, and it could not be denied that others were actively involved in regional and international activities in various fields.

36. The United Arab Emirates had adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and had taken steps to implement it, inter alia, by establishing shelters and counselling centres for women victims of violence, as well as specialized courts. Women also had access to economic, social, legal, psychological and medical assistance, and special measures had been adopted to protect divorced women and to improve the conditions under which they could see their children.

37. The United Arab Emirates commended the efforts undertaken by the United Nations system for the advancement of women and the elimination of violence and discrimination against them.

38. **Ms. Kidanu** (Ethiopia) said that, since women accounted for half of the world's population, and thus half of the human potential of society, her Government saw gender equality as a prerequisite for economic and social development. In Ethiopia, gender inequalities could be explained by past political, economic, social and cultural injustices against women. Determined to address that situation, the Government had revised its legislation to make legal instruments gender sensitive and had incorporated gender equality into the Family Code. Furthermore, the Penal Code had classified female genital mutilation, rape and trafficking in women as punishable offences.

39. To achieve the economic empowerment of women, the Government had focused its efforts on the agricultural sector, which was the engine of the national economy, by taking measures to facilitate women's access to land, credit and productive resources.

40. In the area of health, the national primary health-care plan implemented in 1993 was intended to provide decentralized services for all, focusing primarily on communicable diseases, nutrition, maternal and child health care and the environment. Since 1997, within the framework of development programmes, young women had been trained to raise awareness at the grass-roots level about the importance of health, HIV/AIDS prevention and family planning.

41. The measures taken in the area of education were aimed at increasing the school enrolment rate of women and girls, inter alia through the establishment of both a parent-teacher association to mobilize the local community and an educational management board which included female teachers. The Government was also working to increase the participation in educational programmes of girls and women from pastoral communities. Furthermore, higher educational institutions addressed women's issues within the context of various capacity-building programmes.

42. Laws and public policies alone would clearly not bring about gender equality without a corresponding change in attitudes. Violence against women was rooted in tradition: female genital mutilation, abduction, domestic violence and rape were common practices in Ethiopia. To eliminate such practices, awareness-raising programmes had been implemented at the local level and discussions had been held at all levels of the administration in cooperation with donors and non-governmental organizations, including through a tripartite project financed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

43. Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns had been carried out across the country to increase the decision-making power of women, who, since the 2005 election, were better represented in Parliament, where they held 22 per cent of the seats. A civil service reform programme also encouraged women to participate in decision-making, while Government institutions were obliged to establish women's affairs departments at all levels.

44. In view of the progress achieved, the desire for change expressed by the Government and women of Ethiopia, and the laws and institutional mechanisms in place, her delegation believed that the MDGs for the advancement of women could be achieved earlier than anticipated.

45. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that the advent of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal had paved the way for new opportunities for the advancement of women. For example, almost one third of the members of the Constituent Assembly were women and the rights of women had been included in the interim Constitution, which protected the civil liberties and fundamental freedoms of citizens, including women.

46. Within the framework of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Nepal had amended its discriminatory laws, financed the training of single women for their social and economic empowerment, encouraged the participation of women in the formulation and implementation of local development programmes, and had adopted provisions for improved representation of women in public institutions, for their access to property and for respect of their rights as citizens. While women also had better access to basic education and to health services, disparities remained.

47. As a party to most international instruments relating to women's rights, Nepal had adopted legal and administrative measures to combat all forms of discrimination, including trafficking in women and children and domestic violence. For example, service centres had been established where victims of violence could receive treatment, legal aid and psychological counselling. Nepal also advocated concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to protect women migrant workers.

48. Nepal welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence of the United Nations, which provided for the establishment of a composite entity responsible for coordinating the activities of bodies for the advancement of women. Since funding was the most important factor for the advancement of women, his delegation called on the international community to increase its financial and technical assistance to developing countries, particularly to the least developed countries and to countries emerging from conflict, in order to complement their national efforts.

49. **Mr. El Mkhantar** (Morocco), recalling all the efforts already under way, said that his country welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 and Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) on sexual violence in armed conflict, which expressed the desire of the international community to work together for the advancement of women and the consolidation of peace and security in the world.

50. On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Morocco had withdrawn its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it had ratified in June 1993, thereby demonstrating its steadfast commitment to adhere to the relevant international instruments.

51. Morocco viewed the role of women in society based not only on the values of Islam, which advocated gender equality, but also on the shared values and universal principles which were the common heritage of humanity. Its desire to promote the role of women in society could be illustrated by many examples: women were increasingly involved in the Kingdom's representative, executive and legal institutions, and the appointment of women to high-level posts reflected the commitment of Morocco to women's participation in public administration. The country had, inter alia, one

woman adviser to the King, five women ministers and 35 women members of Parliament.

52. Morocco had recently launched a multisectoral programme to combat gender-based violence through the empowerment of women and girls, which was part of the efforts to achieve the MDGs. It had also undertaken some legal amendments to promote and protect women's rights, including in the new Family Code, the Nationality Code, the electoral law and the Penal Code. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance had published its third gender report to inform the debate on policy and its impacts.

53. Lastly, he stressed that any initiative aimed at the empowerment and advancement of women should be part of a democratic, comprehensive and holistic approach and that any efforts in support of democracy must be transformed into social, educational and economic policies that took gender aspects into account.

54. **Mr. Ramafole** (Lesotho), noting that his country was a party to several international human rights instruments that sought to address gender inequalities, recalled that Lesotho had also adopted a gender and development policy. The policy served as a framework to combat gender inequalities by providing women and men with equal opportunities to participate in political life, decision-making and the development process. It also sought to provide equal access to education and training, health services and control over resources such as land and credit.

55. The Parliament of Lesotho had adopted a law in 2003 which made sexual violence a punishable offence, with increased punishment for persons who deliberately exposed others to HIV, and which provided protection for victims. As a result, there had been a notable decrease in the number of cases of sexual violence. In 2006, Lesotho had enacted a law on the legal capacity of married persons, which gave women the same reproductive rights as men and protected women's property rights. In order to prepare for the entry into force of the law, the Government of Lesotho had held workshops to inform the public about its content, and the law enforcement agencies had also received the requisite training. The Government was also actively involved in the preparations for the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the documents which formed the basis of its initiatives for the advancement of women.

56. The largest obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women was the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Women were the hardest hit by the pandemic, since they were faced with the extra responsibility of providing care for patients and taking care of their families. The Government of Lesotho, in cooperation with its partners, would continue to intensify its efforts to eradicate HIV/AIDS and remained committed to the advancement of women and gender equality.

57. **Ms. Ivanović** (Serbia) said that, while the objective of gender equality remained remote, she welcomed the attention being paid to the issue of the advancement of women as the international community prepared to mark the anniversary of the adoption of three milestone documents. Her country aligned itself with the statement of the delegation of Sweden on behalf of the European Union with respect to the agenda item under consideration and wished to draw attention to the measures taken by Serbia at the national level.

58. The Constitution of Serbia provided equal opportunities for men and women, and special interim measures had been adopted for that purpose. Furthermore, several mechanisms had been established, such as the Gender Equality Council, which evaluated the situation with regard to the advancement of women and proposed relevant measures to the Government in order to strengthen the position of women in society, and the Directorate for Gender Equality, which was responsible for drafting laws and strategies, implementing international instruments, promoting equal opportunity policies for men and women and conducting awareness-raising campaigns, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other regional and international organizations. Parliament had its own Gender Equality Committee, which assessed public policy and reviewed the implementation of laws, and various mechanisms had also been established in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and at the local level. In addition, a national strategy to advance the status of women and to promote gender equality had been adopted in February 2009, a draft law was currently being reviewed by Parliament and training programmes had also been drawn up.

59. As a result of those measures, the number of women in decision-making bodies had significantly

increased. For example, the Speaker of Parliament, as well as the Ministers of Finance, Justice and Youth and Sports, were women. There were more women than men in the judiciary and the number of women in the police and the military had increased. Serbia was determined to continue to promote gender equality through the implementation of international standards in its domestic legislation, the enactment of new laws and the organization of awareness-raising campaigns.

60. **Ms. Polo** (Togo) said that, in the context of efforts to protect human rights, it was regrettable that women continued to face injustice and discrimination in the home, in the workplace and in daily life, even though they represented 50 per cent of the world's population and made a valuable contribution to the national socio-economic development process. Despite the progress made, few women participated in political life and the objective of gender equality was far from being achieved. However, men and women must learn to share responsibilities in order to counter persistent stereotypes in society, and mechanisms must be established to facilitate the integration of women into the economy and to help them balance work and family responsibilities. Her Government was therefore actively involved in promoting the adoption of various measures aimed at encouraging women to play a key role.

61. In order to implement the law banning female mutilation in Togo and to strengthen punishment for the violation of women's rights, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women was establishing centres where women could file complaints and alert the public authorities so that the perpetrators of such violence could be prosecuted. The Government was committed to providing training for the personnel of those centres and awareness-raising activities were also being organized by the Ministry with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

62. Other steps had also been taken to strengthen the policy and institutional framework, to promote gender equality through the adoption of a national policy, to revise the Code of Persons and the Family and to establish ministerial coordination mechanisms. In addition, affirmative action measures had been adopted to help girls finance their studies and to strengthen women's economic capacities.

63. In the context of the current economic and financial crisis, it was important to continue to invest in human resources and particularly in women, who played an active role in many sectors of the economy. In order to support the efforts already under way and to increase women's economic power, the Department for the Advancement of Women had drawn up strategies to promote female entrepreneurship and to strengthen women's capacities, including their financial capacities. In that regard, she commended development partners for their support to her Government, which had always made the advancement of women a top priority.

64. **Ms. Mongwa** (Botswana) reaffirmed her delegation's support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Since Botswana had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, Parliament had been amending a range of laws in order to eradicate discriminatory provisions. Furthermore, to guide its efforts in that area, the Government had adopted a policy to encourage the involvement of women in development, a national gender equality programme and, within that framework, an advocacy and social mobilization strategy. Botswana also cooperated with several development partners, civil society groups, State-owned establishments and the private sector, particularly agencies dealing with maternal health and the contribution of women to development, which was of crucial importance for socio-economic development. Unfortunately, the current multiple crises were undermining the efforts to empower women and to achieve the MDGs. Concerted steps must therefore be taken.

65. Her delegation welcomed the achievements of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and commended the work being undertaken by UNIFEM, especially its efforts to eradicate poverty, combat violence against women and promote the participation of women in democratic governance. However, her delegation was concerned by the potential impact of the current crises on the health of women, particularly with respect to incidences of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. In view of the persistent discrimination and continuing violence facing women and girls, she also fully supported the campaign launched by the United Nations. Furthermore, Botswana welcomed the decision taken by the Organization to establish a new

gender entity, which would provide new directions for activities in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Her delegation stood ready to work with other Member States to finalize the remaining details in that regard. It remained determined to promote equality for all and would do its part to achieve the universal goals laid down by Member States of the United Nations.

66. **Ms. Gastaldo** (International Labour Organization (ILO)), recalling that the ninety-eighth session of the International Labour Conference had discussed gender equality and decent work and that ILO had launched a campaign in June 2008 entitled "Gender equality at the heart of decent work", underlined that those initiatives had resulted in the adoption of a resolution which, in accordance with the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, sought to integrate gender equality into the four strategic objectives of ILO. Having listed the main subjects dealt with by the resolution and the aspects highlighted therein, she said that follow-up actions were being implemented by several ILO units and those would be taken into account in the ILO programme and budget for 2010 to 2011, in particular in the context of the current economic crisis.

67. Projections for 2009 showed a deterioration in global labour markets for both women and men. Meanwhile, global trends published in March 2009 confirmed that women were generally at a disadvantage compared to men and that unemployment could be expected to rise in regions where women had already faced difficulties in finding employment before the crisis. Given the prospect of a prolonged global increase in unemployment, poverty and inequality, the International Labour Conference had adopted the Global Jobs Pact, which was designed to guide national and international policies aimed at stimulating economic recovery, generating jobs and providing protection to working people and their families. Its objective was to guarantee the effectiveness of the recovery measures. Furthermore, ILO was giving special attention to the impact of the crisis on migration and was currently developing a guide for policymakers and workers' and employers' organizations which focused on how to enhance the contribution of women migrant workers to development and on the nexus between migration, gender equality and development.

68. To assess the achievement of gender equality, ILO had also conducted a participatory gender audit which had given added support to the United Nations country team performance indicators for gender equality. As a result of the audit, teams based in Africa and Asia had been able to mainstream a gender perspective into the "Delivering as one" programme.

69. The ILO International Training Centre was working in close cooperation with the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality on the implementation of training programmes to strengthen capacities for assessing the effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming strategy in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Centre also provided training courses on gender budgeting, female poverty and employment, women's employment rights and non-discrimination. It was currently conducting a campaign on behalf of the European Commission to combat gender stereotypes in small companies.

70. Lastly, she reaffirmed the commitment of ILO to the promotion of gender equality and decent work. ILO looked forward to participating actively in the discussion on that agenda item.

71. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union), recalling the milestone events of the Beijing Conference, the First World Conference on Women and the forthcoming 2010 conference, wondered whether it was possible to be satisfied with the pace of change over the past 35 years. While women now accounted for 18.6 per cent of members of parliament around the world, which represented significant progress, that figure was still far from the 30 per cent target set at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

72. In view of the forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Inter-Parliamentary Union had launched a review to assess the achievements made in terms of senior posts, particularly in parliaments. In that context, some 80 members and chairpersons of parliamentary committees from 35 countries had held a meeting in Geneva to attempt to determine whether parliament was a more open institution to women than other decision-making bodies. Considering that the question should first and foremost be addressed by focusing on figures and percentages, the participants believed that they could answer in the affirmative, since only nine parliaments were exclusively composed of men. Nevertheless, while parliaments were no longer an exclusively male domain, they were far from being gender balanced.

73. Women's political participation continued to be hindered by the difficulty of balancing professional demands and family responsibilities, funding, political party support, and cultural attitudes and stereotypes. However, it was encouraging to note that, over the past decade, the introduction of electoral gender quotas had enabled 22 of the 25 countries that had adopted such systems to increase the representation of women in parliament to at least 35 per cent. Public or private funding, or a combination of both, could promote women's participation, for example, by encouraging political parties to earmark specific amounts. Spending limits were another way to level the political playing field for everyone. The option of including a gender-sensitive finance component in laws and policies on political participation had also been mentioned.

74. Political parties also had a key role to play in that regard, particularly by respecting the principles of internal party democracy and, thereby, promoting the increased participation of women. Furthermore, the establishment of communication and leadership training programmes, and of mentoring between women, could help to cultivate the emergence of a new class of female leaders.

75. The meeting of members and heads of parliamentary commissions had also provided an occasion to determine whether women had real or symbolic opportunities to contribute to the work of parliament. The participants had noted that the entry of women into parliament, a typically male domain, could be a source of new challenges. Hence the need for a critical mass of women of at least 30 per cent so that there would be a sufficient number of women to take part in several committees, and so that they could begin to redefine political priorities and bring their own concerns to the fore. The participants had also noted that women must support each other, work together for change beyond party lines, and endeavour to cooperate and work with men to achieve the changes required. Lastly, the participants had seen the institution of parliament as a workplace with inherent biases that needed to be eradicated. Parliaments must also implement family-friendly and non-gender biased measures, since the level of gender sensitivity should be a measure of good institutional performance.

76. Those preliminary findings should provide some food for thought and would help to improve the preparations for the mid-term review of the Beijing Platform for Action, to be held in March 2010.

77. **Mr. Füllemann** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) stressed that the international community, for several years, had increasingly recognized the needs of women, as demonstrated by the recent initiative of the General Assembly to consolidate different entities within the United Nations system in order to promote the rights and well-being of women worldwide.

78. ICRC had already recognized those needs in periods of armed conflict by adopting a corresponding plan of action at its twenty-seventh international conference in 1999. It further pledged to emphasize through its activities the special respect accorded to women and girls by international law, including by urging all parties to an armed conflict to respect the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence. The multidimensional approach of ICRC, aimed at identifying and addressing the needs of women and girls affected by armed conflict and other situations, was based on the principle that conflicts had wide-ranging impacts on their lives. In addition to exposing them to the risk of bodily injury, war could also compromise their access to health care, force them to flee their homes, separate them from their family members and deprive them of drinking water, food or their main breadwinner. Given those realities, ICRC supported women in their various roles within communities, particularly by involving them in the search for solutions.

79. In view of the alarming number of women and girls subjected to sexual violence, particularly rape, ICRC had developed highly innovative programmes through the establishment of counselling centres, where victims of sexual violence and other traumas could meet with psychosocial counsellors to determine courses of action. If necessary, the counsellors could refer those women to medical or legal services and might also mediate between the victim and her family to reduce the risk of stigma or rejection.

80. ICRC responded to the needs of female-headed families, following the disappearance, detention or death of their husbands, by providing them with food, hygiene articles and essential household items. In cooperation with local non-governmental organizations, ICRC also supported income generation for women and helped them to recover their economic independence. Furthermore, it cooperated with governmental bodies so that eligible women had access to social welfare programmes.

81. ICRC also assisted civilians through a broad range of activities, including water projects, vaccination campaigns and market gardening. Furthermore, ICRC supported the training of traditional midwives, who were often the only source of reproductive health care for women and newborns, and encouraged women's participation in community meetings so that they could express their views and stay informed.

82. He took the opportunity to reaffirm the importance of incorporating the needs, ideas and capacities of women and girls in all decision-making processes. ICRC would continue to improve protection for women and girls during armed conflict. It recognized the need to create separate programmes to respond to their other needs, including social, psychosocial, medical or economic needs, and would also continue to provide them with assistance so that they could rebuild their lives in the aftermath of conflict.

83. He reiterated that it was essential to end sexual violence perpetrated in connection with armed conflict. ICRC stood ready to work with all States parties to the Geneva Conventions that were determined to combat such war crimes and to punish their perpetrators.

84. **Ms. Strauss** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) welcomed the opportunity to address the Committee in relation, inter alia, to the Secretary-General's report on violence against women migrant workers. Women now accounted for almost half of the total number of migrant workers in the world and an increasing number of them were searching for better opportunities elsewhere. Unfortunately, those opportunities were often marred by stereotypes, discrimination and harassment, as the Secretary-General had indicated in his report, which stressed that women migrant workers continued to be particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and discrimination. Such women were doubly vulnerable, owing to their status and their gender. They had to deal with difficult living and working conditions, increased health risks, a lack of access to social services and various forms of abuse. They also had no bargaining power and limited opportunities for establishing networks to receive essential information and social support. Furthermore, they often faced incarceration or deportation if they attempted to leave their employer.

85. That deplorable situation became worse during economic downturns. It was therefore crucial to guard against policies aimed at sending migrant workers home, given not only the negative consequences of such measures for development but also the tensions that might be created between host and migrant communities in the battle for their economic survival. The mistaken perception of local workers that foreigners were taking their jobs helped to fuel marginalization and xenophobia, which had very negative impacts on both migrants and host societies. That was particularly true for women migrant workers, who were generally confined to low-skill or "typically female" work, particularly in the informal economy and in domestic, hotel and catering services, for example, which were regularly characterized by bad working conditions, low pay, high insecurity and a high risk of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse that the financial crisis was likely to exacerbate.

86. Through its gender mainstreaming policy, IOM intended to ensure that the needs of all migrant women were identified, taken into consideration and addressed by its projects and services. It also intended to address the issue of violence against women migrant workers in order to promote their physical, social and economic well-being. While her organization was convinced that migration could help to empower female migrant workers, it acknowledged that other crucial factors were the context in which migration occurred, the type of movement and the status of the women involved. Empowerment was more likely to occur when the woman who migrated was employed in the formal sector on the basis of a long-term contract. IOM therefore recommended that women migrant workers should have the same protection and safety at work, and the same means of redress, as the local workforce. Policymakers, practitioners and the public needed to be better informed about the vulnerability of women migrant workers, including their vulnerability to discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

87. It was crucial not to neglect such women, whether those left behind by a migrating husband, those migrating as qualified nurses, or those migrating irregularly into informal sectors where they played such an important role while remaining socially invisible. To ensure the protection of women, including women migrant workers, and to break the cycle of violence against them, an unfailing commitment was needed on the part of State and non-State actors as well as men and boys. A change of attitudes was also required within families, communities and societies. In other words, much remained to be done.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.